Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP)

1400 South 19th Avenue, Bozeman MT, 59718

Draft Environmental Assessment

Environmental Assessment for the Reintroduction of Native Westslope Cutthroat Trout in Ruby Creek by Removal of Non-native Rainbow Trout with Electrofishing and Rotenone

PART I: PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

A. Type of Proposed Action: Removal of non-native fish followed by native fish species (westslope cutthroat trout) reintroduction.

B. Agency Authority for the Proposed Action:

87-1-702. Powers of department relating to fish restoration and management. The department is hereby authorized to perform such acts as may be necessary to the establishment and conduct of fish restoration and management projects as defined and authorized by the act of Congress, provided every project initiated under the provisions of the act shall be under the supervision of the department, and no laws or rules or regulations shall be passed, made, or established relating to said fish restoration and management projects except they be in conformity with the laws of the State of Montana or rules promulgated by the department, and the title to all lands acquired or projects created from lands purchased or acquired by deed or gift shall vest in, be, there remain in the State of Montana and shall be operated and maintained by it in accordance with the laws of the State of Montana. The department shall have no power to accept benefits unless the fish restoration and management projects created or established shall wholly and permanently belong to the state of Montana, except as hereinafter provided.

87-1-201. Powers and Duties. Subsection (9)(a) The department shall implement programs that:

(i) manage wildlife, fish, game, and nongame animals in a manner that prevents the need for listing under 87-5-107 or under the federal Endangered Species Act, 16 U.S.C. 1531, et seq.;

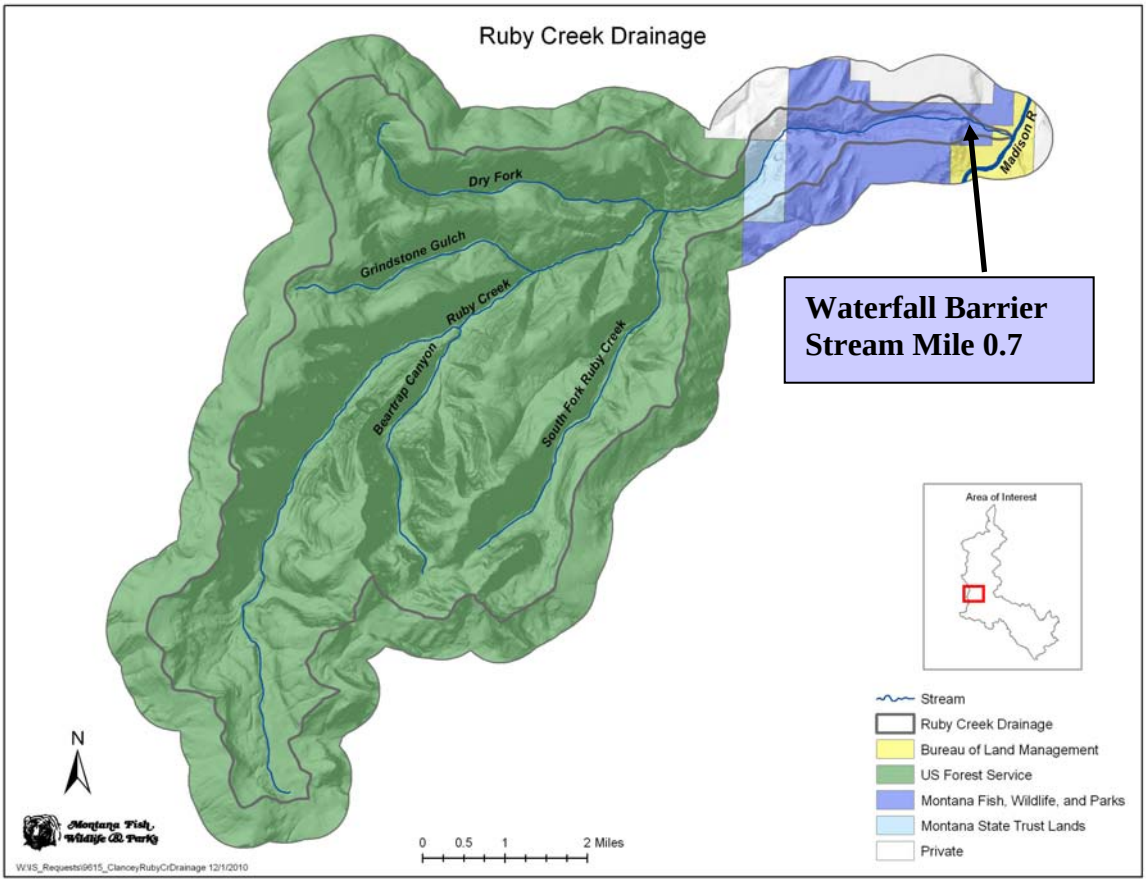
(ii) manage listed species, sensitive species, or a species that is a potential candidate for listing under 87-5-107 or under the federal Endangered Species Act, 16 U.S.C. 1531, et seq., in a manner that assists in the maintenance or recovery of those species.

C. Estimated Commencement Date: August or September 2012. A second treatment may be necessary approximately one year after the first treatment to ensure achievement of the desired objective of eradicating nonnative rainbow trout followed by introduction of westslope cutthroat trout *Oncorhynchus clarkii lewisi*.

D. Name and Location of the Project: Reintroduction of Native Westslope Cutthroat Trout in Ruby Creek by removal of Nonnative Rainbow Trout with Electrofishing and Rotenone

The project site is located in Madison County approximately 20 miles south of the town of Ennis, MT; T9S R1W. Ruby Creek is a tributary to the Madison River. The portion of the stream that is proposed for rotenone treatment flows through property managed or owned by the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest Madison Ranger District, Montana Departments of Fish, Wildlife & Parks, and Natural Resources & Conservation, and the Imerys Talc Mine (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Map depicting the location of Ruby Creek within the Madison River drainage and the land ownership within the Ruby Creek Drainage.



E. Project Size (acres affected)

1. Developed/residential – 0 acres
2. Industrial – 0 acres
3. Open space/Woodlands/Recreation – 0 acres
4. Wetlands/Riparian – The treated length of Ruby Creek and tributaries would be approximately 10.0 stream miles.
5. Floodplain – 0 acres
6. Irrigated Cropland – 0 acres
7. Dry Cropland – 0 acres
8. Forestry – 0 acres
9. Rangeland – 0 acres

F. Narrative Summary of the Proposed Action and Purpose of the Proposed Action

Location of the Proposed Action

Ruby Creek is a moderate sized, easterly flowing stream that meets the Madison River at the Bureau of Land Management West Madison Recreation Area. Stream discharge measurements are shown in Table 1. All measurements are of the entire stream flow not affected by irrigation or stock water withdrawals.

Table 1. Ruby Creek stream discharge measurements and locations.

Date	Stream Mile	Discharge (cfs)
September 15, 2011	2.4	14.9
March 25, 2011	0.7	9.1
July 8, 2009	2.6	15.4

The area of the Ruby Creek drainage targeted for westslope cutthroat trout (WCT) reintroduction is the mainstem of Ruby Creek above a waterfall at stream-mile 0.7 (Figure 2), including fish-occupied habitat as far upstream as stream-mile 9.0, and about 1 mile of the South Fork Ruby Creek. During habitat surveys in 2010, Ruby Creek was intermittent from about mile 7.0 to mile 10.0, and the tributaries Dry Fork, Grindstone Gulch, and Beartrap Canyon were all dry.

Figure 2. Ruby Creek waterfall at stream mile 0.7. This waterfall is a barrier to upstream fish movement and would serve to isolate the reintroduced WCT population from non-native fish.

Background and Need for the Proposed Action

Westslope cutthroat trout, Montana's state fish, has declined in abundance, distribution, and genetic diversity throughout its native range (Shepard et al. 2003). Reduced distribution of WCT is particularly evident in the Missouri River drainage of Montana where genetically pure populations are estimated to persist in about 5% of habitat they historically occupied. Major factors contributing to this decline include competition with nonnative brook *Salvelinus fontinalis*, brown *Salmo trutta*, and rainbow trout *O. mykiss* that were first introduced in Montana in the 1890's, hybridization with rainbow and Yellowstone cutthroat trout *O. c. bouvieri*, habitat changes, and isolation to small headwater streams. Due to these threats, most remaining WCT populations in the Missouri River drainage are considered to have a low likelihood of long-term (100 years) persistence unless conservation actions are implemented (Shepard et al. 1997). The USFWS has been petitioned to list WCT as a threatened species on two occasions. Most recently in August 2003, they found listing was not warranted, stating, "The conservation efforts presently being accomplished as part of the routine management objectives of State and Federal agencies, and as part of formal interagency agreements and plans, provide substantial assurance that the WCT subspecies is being conserved." Nevertheless, the species remains a species of concern with projects like the proposed Ruby Creek WCT introduction contributing to such decisions.

Establishment of new WCT populations is a high priority for conservation of WCT in Montana (FWP 2007). Objective 3 of the *Memorandum of Understanding and Conservation Agreement for Westslope Cutthroat Trout and Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout in Montana* is "Seek collaborative opportunities to restore and/or expand each cutthroat trout subspecies into selected suitable habitats within their respective historic ranges." The *Memorandum of Understanding and Conservation Agreement for Westslope Cutthroat Trout and Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout in Montana* was cooperatively developed and signed by American Wildlands, Blackfeet Tribe, Crow Tribe, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, Federation of Fly-Fishers, Glacier National Park, Greater Yellowstone Coalition, Montana Chapter of the American Fisheries Society, Montana Department of Natural Resources & Conservation, Montana Farm Bureau, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Montana Stockgrowers Association, Montana Trout Unlimited, Montana Wildlife Federation, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Plum Creek, private landowners, the Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the U.S. Forest Service, and Yellowstone National Park.

The preferred donor populations for Ruby Creek are the only two remaining genetically pure, aboriginal WCT populations in the Madison Drainage, one in an unnamed tributary to Grayling Creek in the Montana portion of Yellowstone National Park, the other in Wally McClure Creek in the Hebgen Basin. These two populations together occupy a total of 5 stream miles, so successful establishment into the Ruby Creek Drainage would more than double their distribution. Additionally, Ruby Creek is a larger stream (base flow approximately 9 cfs) than either of the two donor streams (base flows less than 4 cfs). Another advantage of the Ruby Creek Drainage is the presence of the 15-foot waterfall that prevents upstream fish movement and would isolate the introduced WCT from non-native fish. The cost of constructing barriers to isolate native cutthroat from non-natives commonly exceeds $100,000 and in remote areas have cost significantly more.

Ruby Creek upstream of the waterfall is occupied by native mottled sculpin and non-native rainbow trout. The presence of mottled sculpin above the waterfall barrier suggests that native fish, including WCT, historically occupied the stream. The origin of the rainbow trout above the waterfall is unknown, though FWP speculates that formation of the waterfall is a relatively recent event. Several large boulders rather than a geologic outcrop form the waterfall suggesting that perhaps it developed from boulders sloughing off the adjacent rock formations, perhaps during the 1959 earthquake that occurred in the area. If that is the case, rainbow trout would have had several decades since their introduction into the Madison River to occupy Ruby Creek and displace the native WCT. Brown trout are known to use Ruby Creek below the waterfall barrier for spawning, but none were captured during sampling above the waterfall.

Irrigation water is withdrawn from Ruby Creek at mile 2.1 by the sole water right holder. Land management activities by the USFS and FWP are consistent with native trout conservation goals (see Attachment 1 – letters from Madison Ranger District and Dillon BLM).

Personnel of the Montana Natural Heritage Program (MNHP) and FWP conducted western pearlshell mussel *Margaritifera falcata* (WPSM) surveys August 2, 2011, above and below the waterfall and in the Madison River near the mouth of Ruby Creek. WPSM are a long-lived native mussel classified by MNHP as a Species of Concern (SOC). Though reduced from their historic range, they serve as an indicator of the original distribution of westslope cutthroat trout due to their method of dispersal that is optimized by fish of the genus *Oncorhynchus* (cutthroat or rainbow trout). The larval stage (glochidium) of the WPSM briefly parasitizes the gills of a host fish until it matures into juvenile mussel and detaches from the fish. No WPSM were found during the surveys, and habitat characteristics in Ruby Creek were determined to not be favorable for WPSM.

Boreal toads (*Bufo boreas*), a Species of Concern in Montana, have not been observed in the Ruby Creek Drainage nor reported to be there by the Montana Natural Heritage Program database (http://mtnhp.org/), though they have been observed in two nearby locations in the Ruby River Drainage (not to be confused with Ruby Creek, a tributary to the Madison River). Ruby Creek is within the historic range of Columbia Spotted Frogs (*Rana luteiventris*), which are not a Species of Concern, but none have been observed or reported within the drainage. Rotenone can cause mortality of both species if exposure occurs at very early tadpole stages. However, in other rotenone projects in the southwest Montana, including other streams in the Madison River Drainage, neither species exhibited rotenone mortality. If tadpoles of either species are present in the Ruby Creek watershed, they would be at the mid or late tadpole stage in August or September during the time rotenone is in the water.

According to the Montana Natural Heritage Database, there are no aquatic invertebrate Species of Concern known to inhabit the Ruby Creek Drainage, but FWP policy calls for aquatic invertebrate sampling within one month prior to rotenone application and again one year later.

Proposed Action

The proposed action is to remove all non-native rainbow trout in the Ruby Creek drainage upstream of the waterfall at mile 0.7 (Figure 1) first by electrofishing capture and physical relocation, then by using rotenone based piscicides. Treated reaches would include the mainstem above the waterfall barrier, intermittent pools above stream mile 7.0, the lower approximately 1 mile of the South Fork of Ruby Creek, and any habitat that is found to be occupied above the intermittent reach and in the tributaries. After the treatment has been completed, genetically pure WCT (live fish or eggs) would be introduced from one or more genetically tested pure populations, possibly for up to five years depending on monitoring results. Establishment and development of the new WCT population would be monitored via electrofishing. Upon successful WCT introduction and spawning, it is anticipated that WCT would naturally colonize available habitat throughout the Ruby Creek Drainage over a several year period.

The proposed project would result in genetically pure WCT population occupying approximately 9.0 miles of stream. A protected, genetically pure WCT population of this size in the Missouri River drainage in Montana is uncommon. Successful completion of this project would establish the second largest genetically pure WCT population in the entire Madison Drainage and the largest upstream of Ennis Reservoir including streams in Yellowstone National Park. Ruby Creek below the waterfall would continue to be maintained as a spawning site for Madison River fish and as a resident non-native trout population.

FWP has used rotenone as a fisheries management tool since 1948 principally to improve angling quality or for native fish conservation.

Rotenone is a naturally occurring substance derived from the roots of tropical plants in the bean family such as the jewel vine (*Derris* spp.) and lacepod (*Lonchocarpus* spp.) that are found in Australia, Oceania, southern Asia, and North, South and Central America. For centuries rotenone has been used, and still is, by native people to capture fish for food in areas where these plants are naturally found. It has been used in fisheries management in North America since the 1930s. Rotenone has also been used as a natural insecticide for gardening and to control parasites such as lice on domestic livestock (Ling 2002).

Rotenone acts by inhibiting oxygen transfer at the cellular level. It is especially effective at low concentrations with fish because it is readily absorbed into the bloodstream through the thin cell layer of the gills. Trout are among the most susceptible species of fish to rotenone. Mammals, birds, and other non-gill breathing organisms do not have this rapid absorption route into the bloodstream and thus can tolerate exposure to concentrations much higher than those used to kill fish.

In 2011, the State of Arizona convened the Rotenone Review Advisory Committee, a ‘blue ribbon committee’ of diverse interests that extensively studied rotenone and the Arizona Fish & Game Department’s use of rotenone for fish management projects. The committee, including interests initially opposed to rotenone use due to environmental and human health

concerns, unanimously concluded "that rotenone is an important fisheries management tool that can be used safely and effectively" and affirmed the Arizona G&F position that rotenone is an important fisheries management tool. The committee was composed of members of the Arizona State Senate and House of Representatives, Arizona Departments of Agriculture, Environmental Quality, Game & Fish, Health Services, and Water Resources, municipalities, various private interests including law firms and sportsman and agricultural interests, the U.S. Forest Service, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and the Environmental Protection Agency. The press release and committee report are available at http://azgfd.net/artman/publish/NewsMedia/Advisory-panel-affirms-Strict-Game-and-Fish-procedures-assure-that-rotenone-is-a-safe-effective-fisheries-management-tool.shtml.

Specifics of the Proposed Treatment

The boundaries for this treatment would include the entirety of the Ruby Creek Drainage (Figure 1). The intended WCT introduction area is the drainage upstream of a waterfall at stream mile 0.7 (Figure 2).

Prior to applying rotenone to the stream, at least one electrofishing effort would be conducted to capture and relocate as many of the existing non-native rainbow trout as possible downstream of the waterfall barrier or into the Madison River. Captured fish would be transferred to aerated coolers or water tanks, transported out of the project area, and allowed to acclimate prior to their release in the river. Staff and equipment from the Ennis National Fish Hatchery would likely assist with holding, transporting, and releasing captured rainbow trout. Similarly, sculpin would be captured by electrofishing and held off-stream in tanks for reintroduction after completion of the rotenone treatment.

Rainbow trout remaining after the electrofishing capture and transfer would be removed by applying rotenone to Ruby Creek upstream of the waterfall known to be inhabited by fish. In August 2010, rainbow trout occupied only mainstem Ruby Creek to mile 7.0, an intermittent pool at mile 8.5, and the lower mile of the South Fork of Ruby Creek. Based on this fish distribution, the total stream length treated would be 9.5 miles. Provided fish do not ascend beyond the intermittent reach of Ruby Creek (mile 7.0 – 10.0), the intermittent pools would be treated with a diluted liquid rotenone mixture from a backpack sprayer or with a powdered rotenone/sand/gelatin 'doughball.' If fish do ascend beyond the intermittent section, another 2½ miles of the mainstem may require treatment. Similarly, if fish ascend higher in the South Fork than the 2010 survey indicated, another 4 miles of stream may require treatment.

Perennial sections of the stream would be treated with a diluted rotenone liquid mixture using constant flow stations (Figure 3) as well as backpack sprayers to treat disconnected waters and slow-moving stream margins and backwaters where the mainstem waters may not mix well. Treatment of these areas is essential for two reasons: - as fish begin to feel the effects of rotenone they move to stream margins or calm water areas to seek refuge, and if they detect the rotenone in the water they tend to seek out waters where they do not detect it. The rotenone formulation that would be used at Ruby Creek was developed specifically to minimize the likelihood of detection. The effects of rotenone can be reversed if fish can

Figure 3. A constant flow station.

access untreated water. Stream water would be used to dilute rotenone in the backpack sprayers and the constant flow stations.

The identified stream reaches would be treated with a rotenone based piscicide, likely CFT Legumine ™ 5% liquid rotenone. Springs and seeps maybe treated with Prentox™ 7% powdered rotenone doughball. The toxic effects of the rotenone would be contained within the boundaries of the project area.

On site assays using caged fish (bioassays) would determine the appropriate rotenone concentration and treatment times necessary to cause mortality of the rainbow trout and would aid in determining the affect of the rotenone on mottled sculpin. A bioassay is conducted by applying the anticipated maximum necessary rotenone concentration at one site for 4 or 8 hours and measuring the response of sentinel fish at various distances downstream to determine how far the rotenone remains effective. If sentinel fish are showing mortality within 4 hours of exposure, the bioassay would be terminated at 4 hours. If they are not showing mortality within 4 hours it would continue to the 8 hour mark. In bioassays conducted for previous projects and in those projects themselves, mortality occurred within 4 hours of exposure to 1 ppm rotenone. Simultaneously, sentinel fish are exposed to various concentrations of rotenone in aerated buckets to determine the minimum effective rotenone concentration. The effective concentration is expected to be consistent with the label recommendations for concentrations for “normal pond use” (i.e., 0.5 to 1 part per million [ppm] CFT Legumine, which is 0.025 to 0.050 ppm active rotenone). Streams similar to Ruby Creek where rotenone has been used to remove nonnative trout species required no more than 1.0 ppm CFT Legumine. In all instances where this has occurred, sculpins have survived treatments using 1 ppm. As a precaution during the actual treatment, sculpins would

be collected throughout the treatment area by electrofishing or other means and held in aerated buckets containing untreated stream water. Sculpins would be released back into the stream once sentinel trout have survived for 4 hours post-treatment.

Rotenone would be primarily applied through the use of constant flow stations. Each constant flow station dispenses a precise amount of diluted rotenone into the stream (Figure 4) based on measured stream discharge. Liquid rotenone would be applied to the stream at regularly spaced intervals based on the bioassays expected to be no more frequent than 2-hour stream travel time. The duration of the application would also be determined by the bioassays, but based on previous experience would likely be no more than 4 hours.

Figure 4. Photo showing trickle of rotenone/water mix (outlined by the yellow box) being applied to a stream.

FWP anticipates the entire chemical treatment can be completed in one or two days but may require several days to complete if surveys in 2012 prior to the project show fish distribution has expanded beyond that found in 2010. Treatments would start in the upstream reaches and progress downstream. If more than one day of treatment is necessary, block nets would be placed in the stream overnight to prevent fish from moving into previously treated stream reaches. When the treatment ends each day, fresh water from untreated areas upstream would begin to dilute the piscicide concentration and oxidation would continue to break down remaining rotenone in the treated reaches of Ruby Creek. Additionally, active neutralization with potassium permanganate would continue until sentinel fish posted immediately upstream of the neutralization station survive for a minimum of four hours indicating a sub-lethal concentration of rotenone.

Previous treatments have shown that fish killed by rotenone rapidly decay and are difficult to find even after a few days post treatment. Significant accumulations of dead fish above the waterfall would be collected and dispersed in the stream to reduce attractiveness to scavengers. Information regarding human and animal consumption of rotenone exposed fish is discussed in Part III, section 8, Risk/Health Hazards.

A second treatment may be necessary approximately one year after the first treatment to ensure achievement of the desired objective of eradicating nonnative rainbow trout. Effectiveness of the treatment would be ascertained through electrofishing surveys of the treated sections of Ruby Creek and associated tributaries. The same treatment, safety measures, and precautions used during the first treatment would be utilized during the second treatment if it is necessary.

Neutralization of the rotenone would begin immediately at or downstream of the waterfall. Several blocknets would be placed between the waterfall and the mouth of Ruby Creek to prevent effected fish from drifting into the Madison River and to assist in collecting effected fish for transfer to untreated water in an effort to recover them. Free-swimming fish within the neutralization zone showing rotenone stress would be collected and transported to a holding pen in the Madison River upstream of the mouth of Ruby Creek or in an aerated tank with untreated water allowing the potential for those fish to recover from the rotenone exposure and be released back into Ruby Creek downstream of the waterfall once it is clear of rotenone. Rotenone-treated water passing the fish barrier (Figure 1) would be neutralized by applying potassium permanganate to the stream (Figure 5) per FWP policy. Application of potassium permanganate to the stream turns the stream water purple (Figure 6). According to the CFT Legumine label, potassium permanganate should be applied to water at the appropriate concentration to compensate for organic demand of the stream so that enough remains to neutralize the rotenone. In previous projects conducted in southwest Montana, 2 - 5 ppm potassium permanganate has been sufficient to achieve neutralization of 1 ppm rotenone within ½ hour of contact time, and in some instances less than 15 minutes. The discharge of the stream would be measured prior to treatment, and the potassium permanganate would be applied at an appropriate rate to meet organic demands and to neutralize the rotenone. Potassium permanganate requires 15 to 30 minutes of contact time to fully neutralize rotenone which should be no more than 1/4 to 1/2 mile of travel time in Ruby Creek. Travel time from the waterfall at stream mile 0.7 to the confluence with the Madison River is variable with stream discharge. When stream discharge at mile 0.7 was 9.1 cfs, travel time from the falls to the river was nearly 40 minutes.

The effectiveness of the potassium permanganate at neutralizing rotenone would be measured using two methods: caged fish at 30 minutes travel time below the neutralization station would be used to measure the toxicity of the water to ensure neutralization objectives have been met, and by use of a colorimeter that measures surplus potassium permanganate concentration in the stream. Additionally, Ruby Creek water will become diluted upon entering the Madison River further ensuring no effect on the treatment of fish in the river.

A potassium permanganate concentration of 0.5 – 1.0 ppm at 30 minutes below the neutralization site ensures that neutralization is adequate. Trout are one of the most sensitive

animals to rotenone, i.e. they are affected by a much lower rotenone concentration than most other test animals (Schnick 1974) and so they serve as an excellent indicator of its presence in the water.

Figure 5. Neutralization system using potassium permanganate.

Figure 6. A stream turned purple by potassium permanganate applied to neutralize rotenone.

For situations where stream travel time is less than 12 hours from the lowermost point of rotenone application to the neutralization station, which is expected to be the situation in Ruby Creek, FWP policy is as follows:

Step 1: Sentinel fish must be placed immediately above the neutralization station.

Step 2: When the travel time is 4 hours or less from the lowest point in the drainage where rotenone is being applied to the neutralization station, start neutralization 2 hours before the theoretical arrival time of the rotenone. When travel time is more than 4 hours, start neutralization at a time equal to ½ the theoretical arrival time. For example, if there is 8 hours of travel time, start the neutralization 4 hours before the theoretical arrival time.

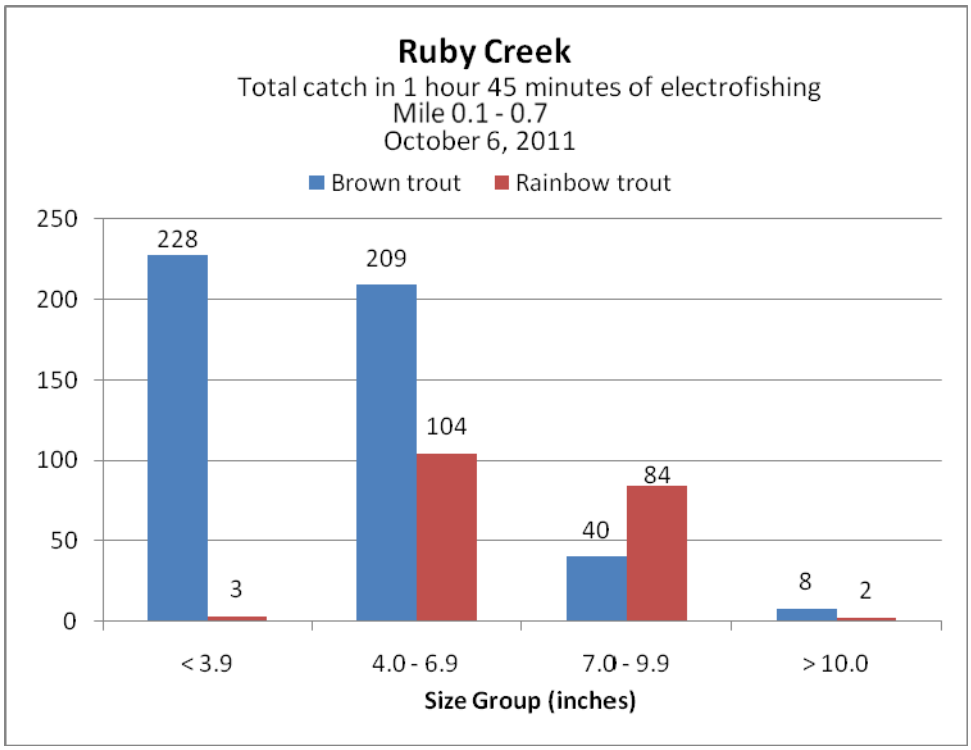
Step 3: Neutralization must be continued until the last of the rotenone has theoretically passed the neutralization station (calculated as the time of last application of rotenone plus the travel time to reach neutralization station), and then stopped only after sentinel fish placed immediately above the neutralization station survive an additional 4 hours without stress.

After completion of the rotenone application, FWP would use caged fish immediately above the neutralization station to evaluate when the waters are no longer toxic to fish. The CFT Legumine label specifies that once caged fish show no signs of distress for 4 hours, the stream water is considered no longer toxic and neutralization can be discontinued. Past projects conducted in Montana have shown that this label procedure is accurate.

To reduce trout mortality in the reach of stream immediately below the barrier (i.e., neutralization zone), fish would be collected with electrofishing prior to treatment and transported at least 1/2 mile downstream or into the Madison River. A block net would be secured across the stream channel to prevent fish from returning to Ruby Creek until completion of the project and would also serve to prevent fish within the neutralization zone from drifting into the river. Any live fish found on the block net will be transferred to live cages in the river or to an aerated tank with untreated water in an effort to resuscitate them, and any of these fish that do not survive will be disposed of in the landfill. Figure 7 displays electrofishing results for Ruby Creek downstream of the waterfall in October 2011.

WCT would be re-introduced into the treated reaches of Ruby Creek through transfer of genetically pure fish or eggs from selected donor stream(s). Transfers would follow all FWP policies for wild fish transfers including, as necessary, consultation with the FWP Fish Health Committee, completion of a wild fish transfer request, disease testing, and genetic testing.

Figure 7. Electrofishing catch of rainbow and brown trout in the neutralization zone of Ruby Creek downstream of the waterfall, October 6, 2011.



Benefits of the Proposed Project

The primary purpose of this project is to help achieve the goal of ensuring the long-term, self-sustaining presence of WCT in the upper Missouri River Drainage by establishing and securing a genetically pure WCT population in the Ruby Creek Drainage. With successful removal of nonnative trout, the benefits of the proposed effort would include:

- Fulfilling the State's obligation to restore and expand remnant genetically pure WCT populations (FWP 2007).
- Reducing threats that may encourage requests for listing WCT under the Endangered Species Act.
- Establish a genetically pure WCT population in the Madison Drainage between Hebgen and Ennis dams.
- Increasing the number of genetically pure WCT populations in the Madison River drainage from 3 to 4.
- Increase the distribution of aboriginal Madison WCT from 5 miles of stream to 13 miles.
- Replicating genetically pure WCT and thereby reducing the likelihood of extirpating rare Madison Drainage WCT
- Establishing a source of genetically pure WCT that could be used to assist in additional WCT restoration efforts.
- Helping to achieve the management goal for cutthroat trout in Montana of long-term,

self-sustaining persistence across the species' historic range.

PART II. ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1 – No Action

The no action alternative would be to cease efforts to establish genetically pure WCT in Ruby Creek. Selection of this alternative would not fulfill the State's obligation to restore and expand existing remnant genetically pure WCT populations (FWP 2007), and would not reduce threats to the species that encourage requests for listing WCT under the Endangered Species Act. There would be no effect on the existing aquatic biota of Ruby Creek.

Alternative 2 (<u>Proposed Action</u>) – Removal of non-native rainbow trout with electrofishing and rotenone and transfer of genetically pure WCT into upper Ruby Creek

The proposed action would include removal of existing non-native rainbow trout from Ruby Creek upstream of the waterfall at stream mile 0.7 with electrofishing, rotenone and subsequent restocking of the treated portions of the drainage with genetically pure WCT from the selected donor stream(s).

Alternative 3 – Electrofishing removal of rainbow trout followed by transfer of genetically pure WCT into upper Ruby Creek

Multiple-pass electrofishing has been used to eradicate unwanted trout (primarily nonnative brook trout) from short sections of several small streams in northcentral Montana (Big Coulee, Middle Fork Little Belt, and Cottonwood creeks) and in southwest Montana (Muskrat, Whites and Staubach creeks). From 2004 – 2010, electrofishing was used annually to remove brook trout from approximately 6 miles of Dyce Creek west of Dillon. Through 2010, it is estimated that this effort reduced Dyce Creek brook trout abundance by 80-95%, but due to the complexity of the stream habitat (e.g., over hanging vegetation and debris jams), and length of the project reach (6 miles), it was not expected that brook trout could be completely eradicated using only electrofishing (Paul Hutchinson, Fisheries Biologist, BLM Dillon District, personal communication). Continued electrofishing removal efforts in Dyce Creek would have required significant labor resources on an annual basis for an indefinite period of time. Rotenone was used to remove the remaining brook trout from Dyce Creek in August 2011. Multiple electrofishing efforts in August – October 2011 found no brook trout in the Dyce Creek treatment area. Similarly, the size of the proposed Ruby Creek project area (9 stream miles and 2.5 times the base flow of Dyce Creek) would require annual labor-intensive multiple-pass electrofishing efforts that may not result in complete removal of the non-native rainbow trout. Therefore, complete removal of rainbow trout by electrofishing was determined not to be a feasible alternative for restoring WCT in Ruby Creek and was eliminated from further consideration.

PART III. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

A. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. LAND RESOURCES **Will the proposed action result in:**	**IMPACT Unknown**	**None**	**Minor**	**Potentially Significant**	**Can Impact Be Mitigated**	**Comment Index**
a. Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure?		X				
b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil which would reduce productivity or fertility?		X				
c. Destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?		X				
d. Changes in siltation, deposition or erosion patterns that may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed or shore of a lake?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard?		X				

2. WATER Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen or turbidity?			X		YES	2a
b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?		X				
c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of flood water or other flows?		X				
d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to water related hazards such as flooding?		X				
f. Changes in the quality of groundwater?		X				2f
g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater?		X				
h. Increase in risk of contamination of surface or groundwater?			X		YES	see 2a,f
i. Effects on any existing water right or reservation?		X				2i
j. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality?			X		YES	2j
k. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity?		X				
l. Will the project affect a designated floodplain?		X				
m. Will the project result in any discharge that will affect federal or state water quality regulations? (Also see 2a)			X		YES	2m

Comment 2a: The proposed project is designed to intentionally introduce a piscicide to surface water to remove non-native fish. The impacts would be short term and minor. Prentox (7% powder) and CFT Legumine (5% liquid) rotenone are EPA registered piscicides and are safe to use for removal of unwanted fish. The concentration of CFT Legumine (5% liquid) proposed is 0.5 to1 part per million. Prentox (7% powder) may be used in a sand and gelatin mix to treat on a very limited basis any springs and seeps within the treatment area.

There are three ways in which rotenone can be neutralized once applied. The most common method is to allow natural breakdown to occur. Rotenone is a compound that is susceptible to natural breakdown (detoxification) through a variety of mechanisms such as water chemistry, water temperature, exposure to organic substances, exposure to air, and sunlight intensity

(Ware 2002; ODFW 2002; Loeb and Engstrom-Heg 1970; Engstrom-Heg 1972; Gilderhus et al. 1986). Rotenone persistence studies by Gilderhus et al. (1986) and Dawson et al. (1991) found that in cool water temperatures of 32 to 46° F the half-life ranged from 3.5 to 5.2 days. Gilderhus et al. (1986) reported that 30% mortality was experienced in rainbow trout exposed to degrading concentrations of actual rotenone (0.004 ppm) in 46° F pond water 14 days after a treatment. By day 18, the concentrations were sub lethal to trout. The second method for neutralization involves dilution by untreated water. This may be accomplished by ground water or untreated surface water flowing into a lake or stream. The final method of neutralization involves the application of an oxidizing agent such as potassium permanganate. This dry crystalline substance is mixed with stream or lake water to produce a concentration of liquid sufficient to neutralize the rotenone. Neutralization is accomplished after about 15-30 minutes of exposure time between the two compounds (Prentiss Inc. 2007).

In the case of Ruby Creek, potassium permanganate would be used to neutralize the rotenone as it passes the waterfall barrier. FWP expects the treated stream above the barrier to naturally detoxify within 48 hours after rotenone application ceases. During previous treatments on other streams, the treated waters have detoxified within 24 hours after cessation of rotenone application as untreated water from upstream sources flows into the treated area and through the aforementioned physical and chemical breakdown processes. Inert ingredients (e.g., carriers) in CFT Legumine volatilize rapidly in the environment by both photolysis and hydrolysis and therefore do not pose a threat to the environment at the levels proposed for fish eradication. It is anticipated that most dead fish would be left on-site in the water. Previous treatments have shown that fish rapidly decay and are difficult to find even after a few days post treatment. In addition, dead fish provide nutrients to the stream benefiting primary and secondary production. However, large accumulations of dead fish would be collected and dispersed throughout the system to avoid attracting scavengers.

Comment 2f: No contamination of groundwater is anticipated to result from this project. Rotenone binds readily to sediments and is broken down by soil and in water (Skaar 2001; Engstrom-Heg 1971, 1976; Ware 2002). Rotenone moves only one inch in most soil types; the only exception would be sandy soils where movement is about three inches (Hisata 2002). In California, studies where wells were placed in aquifers adjacent to and downstream of rotenone applications have never detected rotenone, rotenolone, or any of the other organic compounds in the formulated products (CDFG 1994). Case studies in Montana have concluded that rotenone movement through groundwater does not occur. For example, at Tetrault Lake, Montana, neither rotenone nor inert ingredients were detected in a nearby domestic well which was sampled two and four weeks after applying 90 ppb rotenone to the lake. This well was chosen because it was down gradient from the lake and drew water from the same aquifer that fed and drained the lake. In 1998, a Kalispell-area pond was treated with Prenfish 5% rotenone. Water from a well located 65 feet from the pond was analyzed, and no sign of rotenone was detected. In 2001, another Kalispell-area pond was treated with Prenfish 5% rotenone. Water from a well located 200 feet from that pond was tested four times over a 21 day period and showed no sign of contamination. In 2005, FWP treated a small pond near Thompson Falls with Prenfish to remove pumpkinseeds and bass. A well located 30 yards from the pond was tested, and neither Prenfish nor inert ingredients were found in the well.

Inert ingredients in CFT Legumine volatilize rapidly in the environment by both photolysis and hydrolysis and therefore do not pose a threat to the environment at the levels proposed for fish eradication.

Comment 2i: Introduction of WCT and establishment of a WCT population would have no effect on water rights.

Comment 2j: The CFT Legumine and Prentox labels state "….Do not use water treated with rotenone to irrigate crops or release within 1/2 mile upstream of a potable water or irrigation water intake in a standing body of water such as a lake, pond or reservoir…". Irrigation and stockwater are withdrawn from Ruby Creek at stream mile 2.1 within the treatment area. The water-right holders do withdraw water for operations that periodically lease their pastures. The treatment would occur when no water is being withdrawn from the stream, or alternative water would be provided if necessary to allow the ditch to be closed while stock are in the private pastures. The treatment zone would be thoroughly posted to caution against use of the water while rotenone is being applied (2 – 4 days) and thereafter for a precautionary period 4-6 days total. Finally, rotenone passing downstream of the lower bounds of the treatment area (below the fish barrier; Figure 1) would be neutralized with the addition of potassium permanganate to the stream. In total, impacts to irrigation and potable water intakes would be short term and minor and would be mitigated as necessary.

Comment 2m: FWP would apply for a Notice of Intent (NOI) for a Pesticide General Permit from Montana DEQ.

3. AIR **Will the proposed action result in:**	**IMPACT Unknown**	**None**	**Minor**	**Potentially Significant**	**Can Impact Be Mitigated**	**Comment Index**
a. Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality? (also see 13 (c))		X				
b. Creation of objectionable odors?			X		yes	3b
c. Alteration of air movement, moisture, or temperature patterns or any change in climate, either locally or regionally?		X				
d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants?		X				
e. Will the project result in any discharge which will conflict with federal or state air quality regulations?		X				

Comment 3b: CFT Legumine does not contain the same level of aromatic petroleum solvents (toluene, xylene, benzene, and naphthalene) of other rotenone formulations and as a consequence does not have the same odor concerns and has less inhalation risks. Dead fish would result from this project and may cause objectionable odors as they decay, though

previous treatments have shown fish decay rapidly and are difficult to find even after a few days post treatment.

4. VEGETATION **Will the proposed action result in:**	**IMPACT Unknown**	**None**	**Minor**	**Potentially Significant**	**Can Impact Be Mitigated**	**Comment Index**
a. Changes in the diversity, productivity or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)?			X			4a
b. Alteration of a plant community?		X				
c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?		X				
e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?		X				
f. Will the project affect wetlands, or prime and unique farmland?		X				

Comment 4a: Prior to and during treatment, there would be some human trampling of vegetation along the stream during the placement and monitoring of constant flow stations and sentinel fish locations. Rotenone does not have an effect on plants at concentrations used to kill fish. Impacts from trampling vegetation are expected to be short term and minor.

5. FISH/WILDLIFE Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat?		X				
b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species?			X		YES	5b
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species?			X		YES	5c
d. Introduction of new species into an area?		X				5d
e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?		X				
f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?			X		YES	5f
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)?		X				5g
h. Will the project be performed in any area in which T&E species are present, and will the project affect any T&E species or their habitat? (Also see 5f)		X				
i. Will the project introduce or export any species not presently or historically occurring in the receiving location? (Also see 5d)		X				See 5d

Comment 5b: The proposed action would result in establishment or replication of a new genetically pure westslope cutthroat trout population in Ruby Creek and the removal of an existing rainbow trout population that occupies approximately 8 miles of stream. The introduced WCT population would be expected to occupy a similar distribution.

The proposed removal of rainbow trout from Ruby Creek is considered a minor impact because the current use of the rainbow trout fishery is nominal (based on angler use data), and rainbow trout would continue to be abundant in the lower reaches of Ruby Creek and the Madison River and in numerous other streams in the Madison River basin. The project is intended to increase the abundance and range of genetically pure WCT, a rare and unique species with limited distribution in the Missouri River drainage. Westslope cutthroat trout are currently protected by catch-and-release regulations in most streams in the central fish district, including all streams within the Madison Drainage. Restoration efforts like the proposed action are intended to increase overall WCT abundance which may result in greater fishing opportunities and harvest of this rare native species in the future.

Comment 5c: Nongame (non-target) animals that could be directly impacted by the proposed project include aquatic invertebrates and amphibians. As described below, the expected population level impacts to non-target organisms range from non-existent to short term and

minor. No Species of Concern (SOC) or Threatened and Endangered (T&E) species were identified in the Ruby Creek Drainage in a search of the Montana Natural Heritage database.

Aquatic Invertebrates:

Numerous studies indicate that rotenone has temporary or minimal effects on aquatic invertebrates. One study reported that no significant reduction in aquatic invertebrates was observed due to the effects of rotenone which was applied at levels twice as high as the levels proposed for this project (Houf and Campbell 1977). Chandler and Marking (1982) found that clams and snails were between 50 and 150 times more tolerant than fish to Noxfish (5% rotenone formulation). In all cases, the reduction of aquatic invertebrates was temporary, and most treatments used a higher concentration of rotenone than proposed for this project (Schnick 1974). In a study on the relative tolerance of different aquatic invertebrates to rotenone, Engstrom-Heg et al. (1978) reported that the long-term impacts of rotenone are mitigated because those insects that were most sensitive to rotenone also tended to have the highest rate of recolonization. Temporary changes in aquatic invertebrate community structure due to a rotenone treatment could be similar to what is observed after natural (e.g., fire) and anthropogenic (livestock grazing) disturbances (Wohl and Carline 1996; Mihuc and Minshall 1995; Minshall 2003), though the physical impacts and resulting modifications of invertebrate assemblages after these types of disturbances can last for a much longer period than a piscicide treatment.

Because of their short life cycles (Anderson and Wallace 1984), good dispersal ability (Pennack 1989), and generally high reproductive potential (Anderson and Wallace 1984), aquatic invertebrates are capable of rapid recovery from disturbance (Boulton et al. 1992; Matthaei et al. 1996). Headwater reaches of Ruby Creek that do not hold fish would not be treated with rotenone and would provide a source of aquatic invertebrate colonists. In addition, recolonization would include aerially dispersing invertebrates from downstream areas (e.g., mayflies, caddisflies).

The FWP Piscicide Policy requires sampling for Species of Concern (SOC) and benthic macroinvertebrates prior to and following a treatment. As stated above, no SOC were identified in the Ruby Creek Drainage in a search of the Montana Natural Heritage database.

In southwest Montana as part of a MEPA process, aquatic invertebrates are routinely collected prior to transfers of WCT to historically fishless habitat in headwater mountain streams (e.g., Eureka, Little Tepee, Little Tizer, Elkhorn, Crazy, Whitehorse creeks). In all cases, these collections have shown aquatic invertebrate assemblages typical of headwater streams in western Montana, and in no cases have threatened or endangered species been discovered. The same type of aquatic invertebrate assemblage would be expected in Ruby Creek, and the possibility of eliminating a rare or endangered species is very unlikely.

Mammals and Birds

Mammals are generally not affected by rotenone treatments because they neutralize rotenone by enzymatic action in their stomach and intestines (AFS 2002). Laboratory tests by Marking (1988) fed forms of rotenone to rats and dogs as part of their diet for periods of six months to two years and observed effects such as diarrhea, decreased food consumption, and weight loss. He reported that despite unusually high treatment concentrations of rotenone in rats and dogs, it did not cause tumors or reproductive problems in mammals. Studies of risk for terrestrial animals found that a 22 pound dog would have to drink 7,915 gallons of treated lake water within 24 hours, or eat 660,000 pounds of rotenone-killed fish, to receive a lethal dose (CDFG 1994). The State of Washington reported that a half pound mammal would need to consume 12.5 mg of pure rotenone to receive a lethal dose (Bradbury 1986). Considering the only conceivable way an animal can consume rotenone under field conditions is by drinking lake or stream water, a half pound animal would need to drink 66 gallons of water treated at 1 ppm to receive a fatal dose.

The EPA (2007) made the following conclusion for small mammals and large mammals;

> *When estimating daily food intake, an intermediate-sized 350 g mammal will consume about 18.8 g of food. Using data previously cited from the common carp with a body weight of 88 grams, a small mammal would only consume 21% (18.8/88) of the total carp body mass. According to the data for common carp, total body residues of rotenone in carp amounted to 1.08 μg/g. A 350-g mammal consuming 18.8 grams represents an equivalent dose of 20.3 μg of rotenone; this value is well below the median lethal dose of rotenone (39.5 mg/kg * 0.350 kg = 13.8 mg = 13,800 μg) for similarly sized mammals. When assessing a large mammal, 1000 g is considered to be a default body weight. A 1000 g mammal will consume about 34 g of food. If the animal fed exclusively on carp killed by rotenone, the equivalent dose would be 34 g *1.08 μg/g or 37 μg of rotenone. This value is below the estimated median lethal equivalent concentration adjusted for body weight (30.4 mg/kg * 1 kg = 30.4 mg = 30,400 μg). Although fish are often collected and buried to the extent possible following a rotenone treatment, even if fish were available for consumption by mammals scavenging along the shoreline for dead or dying fish, it is unlikely that piscivorous mammals will consume enough fish to result in observable acute toxicity.*

One study in which rats were injected with rotenone for a period of weeks reported finding lesions characteristic of Parkinson's disease (Betarbet et al. 2000). However, the results have been challenged on the basis of methodology: (1) that the continuous intravenous injection method used in the study leads to "continuously high levels of the compound in the blood," and (2) that dimethyl sulfoxide (DMSO) was used to enhance tissue penetration (normal routes of exposure actually slow introduction of chemicals into the bloodstream). Finally, injecting rotenone into the body is not a normal way of assimilating the compound. Similar studies (Marking 1988) have found no Parkinson-like results. Extensive research has demonstrated that rotenone does not cause birth defects (HRI 1982), gene mutations (Van Goethem et al. 1981; BRL 1982) or cancer (Marking 1988). Rotenone was found to have no direct role in fetal development of rats that were fed excruciatingly high concentrations of rotenone.

Spencer and Sing (1982) reported that rats that were fed diets laced with 10-1000 ppm rotenone over a 10-day period did not suffer any reproductive dysfunction. Typical concentrations of actual rotenone used in fishery management range from 0.025 to 0.50 ppm and are far below that administered during most toxicology studies.

Similar results determined that birds required levels of rotenone at least 1,000 to 10,000-times greater than is required for lethality in fish (Skaar 2001). Cutkomp (1943) reported that chickens, pheasants, and members of lower orders of *Galliformes* were quite resistant to rotenone, and four day old chicks were more resistant than adults. Ware (2002) reports that swine are uniquely sensitive to rotenone and it is slightly toxic to wildfowl, but to kill Japanese quail required 4500 to 7000 times more than is used to kill fish.

The EPA (2007) made the following conclusion for birds;

> *Since rotenone is applied directly to water, there is little likelihood that terrestrial forage items for birds will contain rotenone residues from this use. While it is possible that some piscivorous birds may feed opportunistically on dead or dying fish located on the surface of treated waters, protocols for piscicidal use typically recommend that dead fish be collected and buried, rendering the fish less available for consumption (see Section IV). In addition, many of the dead fish will sink and not be available for consumption by birds. However, whole body residues in fish killed with rotenone ranged from 0.22 µg/g in yellow perch (Perca flavescens) to 1.08 µg/g in common carp (Cyprinus carpio) (Jarvinen and Ankley 1998). For a 68 g yellow perch and an 88 g carp, this represents totals of 15 µg and 95 µg rotenone per fish, respectively. Based on the avian subacute dietary LC_{50} of 4110 mg/kg, a 1000-g bird would have to consume 274,000 perch or 43,000 small carp. Thus, it is unlikely that piscivorous birds will consume enough fish to result in a lethal dose.*

A reduced abundance of aquatic invertebrates and fish may temporally impact local mammals and birds that may prey on these species (e.g, American dipper and mink). The aquatic invertebrate community would recover rapidly from a piscicide treatment while it would be several years for trout abundance to reach levels present prior to treatment. Impacted birds and mammals are mobile and would likely use untreated portions of the Ruby Creek Drainage, adjacent drainages, or the Madison River until full recovery of the Ruby Creek aquatic community.

Donnelly (pers.comm.) found that American dippers in the Cherry Creek Drainage exhibited slightly reduced body condition factor the summer after a fall rotenone treatment but fully recovered the year after. He found no affect on reproductive success such as clutch size, chick survival, or chick body condition.

A compilation of scientific documentation regarding the food habits of mink indicates that mink are generalists in their diet (Novak 1987). This compilation includes studies conducted in Montana and documents that mammals are the most important mink prey item throughout the year followed by birds and invertebrates. Fish replace birds and invertebrates as the second most important food item in the winter. Mink tend to utilize coarse, slow moving fish rather than

faster midstream fish, such as trout, indicating that trout are more likely to escape mink predation even if they are the only fish available. The ability of the mink to utilize a wide variety of prey bases may reduce competition with more specialized carnivores. Mink are also known to readily colonize new habitat and to rapidly recolonize habitat where they have been absent.

Amphibians and Reptiles

Amphibians and reptiles potentially found within the Ruby Creek treatment area include spotted frogs (*Rana luteiventris*), boreal toads *(Bufo boreas)* (amphibians), and western terrestrial (*Thamnophis elegans*), common garter (*T. sirtalis*) and rubber boa (*Charina bottae*) snakes (reptiles). Long-toed salamanders (*Ambystoma macrodactylum*) are common in Montana west of the continental divide, but in southwest Montana east of the divide have been found only in the Elkhorn Mountains (Reichel 1996). They breed in ponds or lakes (very rarely in slow moving streams), usually those without fish present. Rotenone can be toxic to gill-breathing larval amphibians, though air breathing adults are less sensitive. Chandler and Marking (1982) found that southern leopard frog tadpoles were between 3 and 10 times more tolerant than fish to Noxfish (5% rotenone formulation). Grisak et al. (2007) conducted laboratory studies on long-toed salamanders, Rocky Mountain tailed frogs (*Ascaphus truei*), and Columbia spotted frogs and concluded that the adults of these species would not suffer an acute response to Prenfish at trout killing concentrations (0.5-1 mg/L) but the larvae would likely be effected. Billman (2010) applied CFT Legumine (5% rotenone) to a lake in Yellowstone National Park (YNP) in 2006 containing stocked Yellowstone cutthroat trout and to two fishless ponds on the Flying D Ranch in southwestern Montana in 2008. Within 24 hours following application, rotenone caused nearly 100% mortality in gill-breathing amphibian tadpoles but did not affect non-gill breathing metamorphs, juveniles, and adults. In the year(s) following, tadpole repopulation occurred at all treated water bodies and population levels were similar to, or, in the case of YNP, higher than, pre-treatment levels.

These authors recommended implementing rotenone treatments at times when the larvae are not present, such as the fall, to reduce the chance of exposure to rotenone treated water and potential impacts to larval amphibians. The Ruby Creek treatment would be scheduled for August or September which would reduce but not eliminate potential impacts to larval amphibians. Any reduction in amphibian abundance would be expected to be short term because of the low sensitivity of adults to rotenone and the likelihood that many larval amphibians would have metamorphosed by late August. A reduced abundance of aquatic invertebrates may temporally impact larval amphibians that prey on these species though the aquatic invertebrate community would recover rapidly. Reptiles (air-breathing) would not be directly impacted by rotenone treatment, though snakes are known to consume trout which would be temporarily reduced in number by physical removal of trout prior to applying rotenone followed by the rotenone treatment.

Based on the information presented in comment 5c, we would expect population level impacts to non-target organisms to range from non-existent to short term and minor. These impacts may include temporary loss or diminishment of a food source during recolonization of aquatic invertebrate communities and WCT. FWP would assess the environmental impacts of this

project on non-target organisms by monitoring the aquatic invertebrate community with samples collected pre and post treatment.

Comment 5d: Genetically pure WCT would be transferred (live fish or eyed eggs) from the selected donor stream(s) or rearing facility (Sun Ranch Hatchery) after all non-native fish are removed. Transfers would follow all FWP policies for wild fish transfers including consultation with the MT Fish Health Committee, completion of a wild fish transfer request, disease testing, and genetic testing.

Comment 5f: There are no threatened or endangered species known to reside in the proposed treatment area in Ruby Creek though grizzly bears may temporarily traverse the area. Some sensitive terrestrial species that may occasionally occupy the Ruby Creek drainage and could potentially ingest dead fish or treated stream water include great gray owls (*Strix nebulosa*), golden eagles (*Aquila chrysaetos*), northern goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis)*, gray wolf (*Canis lupus*), and wolverines (*Gulo gulo*). Fish do not comprise a significant part of the diet of most of these species, and none of these species, or other mammals and birds common to the area, would be affected by ingestion of dead fish or treated stream water (see comment 5c).

Western pearlshell mussels were not found in the Ruby Creek Drainage or in the Madison River near the mouth of Ruby Creek during an August 2, 2011, survey.

Ruby Creek is within the range of the boreal toad *(Bufo boreas)* which is listed as sensitive species by the USFS and BLM. As previously discussed in Comment 5c, rotenone can be toxic to gill-breathing larval amphibians though air breathing adults are less sensitive. Any reduction in amphibian abundance would be expected to be short term and minor because of the low sensitivity of adults to rotenone, and the likelihood that larval amphibians would have metamorphosed to air-breathing ability by the proposed treatment date in late August or September. Juvenile amphibians have been exposed to similar concentrations of rotenone in other WCT restoration projects and shown little or no affect.

Comment 5i. See comment 5d.

B. HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

6. NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS **Will the proposed action result in:**	**IMPACT Unknown**	**None**	**Minor**	**Potentially Significant**	**Can Impact Be Mitigated**	**Comment Index**
a. Increases in existing noise levels?			X			6a
b. Exposure of people to serve or nuisance noise levels?		X				
c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property?		X				
d. Interference with radio or television reception and operation?		X				

Comment 6a: The noise generated from this project would be short term, minor, and in an isolated area.

7. LAND USE Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area?		X				7a
b. Conflicted with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance?		X				
c. Conflict with any existing land use whose presence would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action?	X					7c
d. Adverse effects on or relocation of residences?		X				

Comment 7a: Existing land use practices, grazing standards, season of grazing, and grazing load would not be affected by removal of non-native rainbow trout and subsequent introduction and establishment of a WCT population.

Comment 7c: The Ruby Creek drainage is accessed by public roads though the road accessing the treatment area is minimally used. As required by EPA regulation, the project area would be closed to the public during the period that rotenone remains fatal to fish. Proper warning through news releases, signing the project area, road closure, and administrative personnel in the project area should be adequate to keep recreationists from unintentionally accessing the area and being exposed to any treated waters or dead fish. At proposed treatment levels, stream water would not be toxic to wildlife, livestock, or humans. However, to limit any potential conflict the treatment would be planned when livestock are pastured elsewhere or livestock would be prevented from accessing stream water during the treatment period. If necessary, alternate water would be provided for livestock and temporary fencing used to prevent them from accessing water that may contain rotenone. Additionally, no livestock are scheduled to be on either FWP or Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest allotments in 2012 after July 14 so would not be exposed to the rotenone treatment.

8. RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Risk of an explosion or release of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to oil, pesticides, chemicals, or radiation) in the event of an accident or other forms of disruption?			X		YES	8a
b. Affect an existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan or create a need for a new plan?			X		YES	8b
c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard?			X		YES	see 8a,c
d. Will any chemical toxicants be used?			X		YES	see 8a

Comment 8a: The principal risk of human exposure to hazardous materials from this project would be limited to the applicators. All applicators would wear safety equipment required by the product labels and the material safety data sheet (MSDS) such as respirator, goggles, rubber boots, protective clothing, and Nitrile gloves. All applicators would be trained on the safe handling and application of the piscicide and permanganate. At least one, and most likely several, Montana Department of Agriculture certified pesticide applicators would supervise and administer the project. Materials would be transported, handled, applied, and stored according to the label specifications to reduce the probability of human exposure or spill.

Comment 8b: FWP requires a treatment plan for rotenone projects. This plan addresses many aspects of safety for people who are on the implementation team such as establishing a clear chain of command, training, delegation and assignment of responsibility, clear lines of communication between members, spill contingency plan, first aid, emergency responder information, personal protective equipment, monitoring and quality control, among others. Implementing this project should not have any impact on existing emergency plans. Because an implementation plan has been developed by FWP, the risk of emergency response is minimal, and any affects to existing emergency responders would be short term and minor.

Comment 8c: The EPA (2007) conducted an analysis of the human health risks for rotenone and concluded it has a high acute toxicity for both oral and inhalation routes but has a low acute toxicity for dermal route of exposure. It is not an eye or skin irritant nor a skin sensitizer. The EPA could not provide a quantitative assessment of potentially critical effect on neurotoxicity risks to rotenone users, so a number of uncertainty factors were assigned to the rating values. They are: a 10x database uncertainty factor, a 10x inter-species uncertainty factor, and a 10x intra-species uncertainty factor. The target margin of exposure (MOE) is 1000. These uncertainty factors have been applied to protect against potential human health effects. It is also important to note that many toxicity studies involve subjecting laboratory specimens to unusually high concentrations of rotenone, or conducting tests on animals that would not normally be exposed to rotenone during use in fisheries management. Table 2 summarizes the EPA toxicological endpoints of rotenone (from EPA 2007).

Rotenolenoids are common degredation products found in the parent plant material used to make piscicidal forms of rotenone. The EPA (2007) concluded these degredation products are no more toxic than the active ingredient.

The EPA analysis of acute dietary risk for both food and drinking water concluded:

> *"…When rotenone is used in fish management applications, food exposure may occur when individuals catch and eat fish that either survived the treatment or were added to the water body (restocked) prior to complete degradation. Although exposure from this route is unlikely for the general U.S. population, some people might consume fish following a rotenone application. EPA used maximum residue values from a bioaccumulation study to estimate acute risk from consuming fish from treated water bodies. This estimate is considered conservative because the bioaccumulation study measured total residues in edible portions of fish including certain non-edible portions (skin, scales, and fins) where concentrations may be higher than edible portions (tissue) and the Agency assumed that 100% of fish consumption could come from rotenone exposed fish. In addition, fish are able to detect rotenone's presence in water and, when possible, attempt to avoid the chemical by moving from the treatment area. Thus, for partial kill uses, surviving fish are likely those that have intentionally minimized exposure.*
>
> *Acute exposure estimates for drinking water considered surface water only because rotenone is only applied directly to surface water and is not expected to reach groundwater. The estimated drinking water concentration (EDWC) used in dietary exposure estimates was 200 ppb, the solubility limit of rotenone. The drinking water risk assessment is conservative because it assumes water is consumed immediately after treatment with no degradation and no water treatment prior to consumption.*
> *Acute dietary exposure estimates result in dietary risk below the Agency's level of concern. Generally, EPA is concerned when risk estimates exceed 100% of the acute population adjusted dose (aPAD). The exposure for the "females 13-49 years old" subgroup (0.1117 mg/kg/day) utilized 74% of the aPAD (0.015 mg/kg/day) at the 95th percentile. It is appropriate to consider the 95th percentile because the analysis is deterministic and unrefined. Measures implemented as a result of this RED will further minimize potential dietary exposure (see Section IV)..."*

Table 2. EPA toxicological endpoints of rotenone (from EPA 2007).

Exposure Scenario	**Dose Used in Risk Assessment, Uncertainty Factor (UF)**	**Level of Concern for Risk Assessment**	**Study and Toxicological Effects**
Acute Dietary (females 13-49)	NOAEL = 15 mg/kg/day UF = 1000 aRfD = 15 mg/kg/day = 0.015 mg/kg/day 1000	Acute PAD = 0.015 mg/kg/day	Developmental toxicity study in mouse (MRID 00141707, 00145049) LOAEL = 24 mg/kg/day based on increased resorptions
Acute Dietary (all populations)	An appropriate endpoint attributable to a single dose was not identified in the available studies, including the developmental toxicity studies.		
Chronic Dietary (all populations)	NOAEL = 0.375 mg/kg/day UF = 1000 cRfD = 0.375 mg/kg/day = 0.0004 mg/kg/day 1000	Chronic PAD = 0.0004 mg/kg/day	Chronic/oncogenicity study in rat (MRID 00156739, 41657101) LOAEL = 1.9 mg/kg/day based on decreased body weight and food consumption in both males and females
Incidental Oral Short-term (1-30 days) Intermediate-term (1-6 months)	NOAEL = 0.5 mg/kg/day	Residential MOE = 1000	Reproductive toxicity study in rat (MRID 00141408) LOAEL = 2.4/3.0 mg/kg/day [M/F] based on decreased parental (male and female) body weight and body weight gain
Dermal Short-, Intermediate-, and Long-Term	NOAEL = 0.5 mg/kg/day 10% dermal absorption factor	Residential MOE = 1000 Worker MOE = 1000	Reproductive toxicity study in rat (MRID 00141408) LOAEL = 2.4/3.0 mg/kg/day
Inhalation Short-term (1-30 days) Intermediate-term (1-6 months)	NOAEL = 0.5 mg/kg/day 100% inhalation absorption factor	Residential MOE = 1000 Worker MOE = 1000	[M/F] based on decreased parental (male and female) body weight and body weight gain
Cancer (oral, dermal, inhalation)	Classification; No evidence of carcinogenicity		

UF = uncertainty factor, NOAEL = no observed adverse effect level, LOAEL = lowest observed adverse effect level, aPAD = acute population adjusted dose, cPAD = chronic population adjusted does, RfD = reference dose, MOE = margin of exposure, NA = Not Applicable

For evaluating the human chronic risk from exposure to rotenone treated water, the EPA acknowledges the four principle reasons for concluding there is a low risk. First, the rapid natural degradation of rotenone. Second, using active neutralization measures by applicators, such as potassium permanganate. Next, properly following piscicide labels which prohibit the

use near water intakes. Finally, proper signing, public notification, or area closures which limit public exposure to rotenone treated water.

As for recreational exposure, the EPA concludes no risk to adults who enter treated water following the application from dermal contact and/or incidental ingestion but requires a waiting period of 3 days after a treatment before toddlers swim in treated water. The aggregate risk to human health from food, water, and swimming does not exceed the EPA level of concern (EPA 2007).

Fisher (2007) conducted an analysis of the inert constituent ingredients found in the rotenone formulation of CFT Legumine for the California Department of Fish and Game. These inert ingredients are principally found in the emulsifying agent Fennodefo^{99} which helps make the generally insoluble rotenone more soluble in water. The constituents were considered because of their known hazard status and not because of their concentrations in the Legumine formulation. Solvents such as xylene, trichloroethylene (TCE), and tetrachloroethylene are residue left over from the process of extracting rotenone from the root and can be found in some lots of Legumine. However, inconsistent detectability and low occurrence in other formulations that used the same extraction process were below the levels for human health and ecological risk. Solvents such as toluene, n-butylbenzene, 1,2,4 trimethylbenzene and naphthalene are present in Legumine, and when used in other applications can be an inhalation risk. However, because of their low concentrations in this formulation, the human health risk is low. The remaining constituents, the fatty acid esters, resin acids, glycols, substituted benzenes, and 1-hexanol were likewise present but either analyzed, calculated, or estimated to be below the human health risk levels when used in a typical fish eradication project.

Methyl pyrrolidone is also found in Legumine. It is known to have good solvency properties and is used to dissolve a wide range of compounds including resins (rotenone). Analysis of methyl pyrrolidone in Legumine showed it represents about 9% of the formulation (Fisher 2007). Regarding the constituent ingredients in Legumine, the analysis concluded;

> *"…None of the constituents identified are considered persistent in the environment nor will they bioaccumulate. The trace benzenes identified in the solvent mixture of CFT Legumine™ will exhibit limited volatility and will rapidly degrade through photolytic and biological degradation mechanisms. The PEGs (polyethylene glycol) are highly soluble, have very low volatility, and are rapidly biodegraded within a matter of days. The fatty acids in the fatty acid ester mixture (Fennodefo99™) do not exhibit significant volatility, are virtually insoluble, and are readily biodegraded, although likely over a slightly longer period of time than the PEGs in the mixture. None of the new compounds identified exhibit persistence or are known to bioaccumulate. Under conditions that would favor groundwater exchange the highly soluble PEGs could feasibly transmit to groundwater, but the concentrations in the reservoir, and the rapid biodegradation of these constituents makes this scenario extremely unlikely. Based upon a review of the physical chemistry of the chemicals identified, we conclude that they are rapidly biodegraded, hydrolyzed and/or otherwise photolytically oxidized and that the chemicals pose no additional risk to human health or ecological receptors from those identified in the earlier analysis. None of the constituents identified appear to be at*

concentrations that suggest human health risks through water, or ingestion exposure scenarios and no relevant regulatory criteria are exceeded in estimated exposure concentrations…"

The Legumine MSDS states "…when working with an undiluted product in a confined space, use a non-powered air purifying respirator…and… air-purifying respirators do not protect workers in oxygen-deficient atmospheres…" It is not likely that workers would be handling Legumine in an oxygen deficient space during normal use. However, to guard against this proper ventilation and safety equipment would be used according to the label requirements.

The advantage of CFT Legumine over Prenfish, another liquid rotenone product, is that CFT Legumine has less petroleum hydrocarbon solvents such as toluene, xylene, benzene, and naphthalene. By comparison, Prenfish has a strong chemical odor. CFT Legumine is virtually odor-free and performs almost identically to Prenfish. Prentox, or powdered rotenone, is simply the ground up roots of the *Derris* plant and as a consequence contains no petroleum or other man-made ingredients. The toxicity of Prentox is therefore attributed exclusively to the rotenoid compounds.

In their description of how South American Indians prepare and apply *Timbó*, a rotenone parent plant, Teixeira et al. (1984) reported that the Indians extensively handled the plants during a mastication process (chewing), and then swam in lagoons to distribute the plant pulp. No harmful effects were reported. It is important to note that the primitive method of applying rotenone from root does not involve a calculated target concentration, metering devices, or involve human health risk precautions as those involved with fisheries management programs.

The occupational risks to humans from rotenone application is low if proper safety equipment and handling procedures are followed as directed by the product labels (EPA 2007). The major risks to human health from rotenone come from accidental exposure during handling and application. This is the only time when humans are exposed to concentrations that are greater than that needed to remove fish. To prevent accidental exposure to liquid formulated or powdered rotenone, the Montana Department of Agriculture requires applicators to be:

- *Trained and certified to apply the pesticide in use*
- *Equipped with the proper safety gear, which, in this case, includes respirator, eye protection, rubberized gloves, hazardous material suit*
- *Have product labels with them during use*
- *Contain materials only in approved containers that are properly labeled*
- *Adhere to the product label requirements for storage, handling, and application*

Beyond this, FWP imposes additional requirements on its employees such as progressive professional training, experience and training requirements for achieving and maintaining progressive Levels of Expertise, and ensuring that all required treatment actions are completed. These actions include, but are not limited to, ensuring proper public notification and signing of the treatment area, ensuring that all rotenone applicators properly use personal protective

equipment, properly measuring the volume of water to be treated and calculating the appropriate quantity of rotenone to be applied, ensuring that initiation and cessation of neutralization follows FWP procedures, and ensuring that non-target organism monitoring is conducted.

9. COMMUNITY IMPACT **Will the proposed action result in:**	**IMPACT Unknown**	**None**	**Minor**	**Potentially Significant**	**Can Impact Be Mitigated**	**Comment Index**
a. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area?		X				
b. Alteration of the social structure of a community?		X				
c. Alteration of the level or distribution of employment or community or personal income?		X				
d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity?		X				
e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?		X				

10. PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES **Will the proposed action result in:**	**IMPACT Unknown**	**None**	**Minor**	**Potentially Significant**	**Can Impact Be Mitigated**	**Comment Index**
a. Will the proposed action have an effect upon or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas: fire or police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, roads or other public maintenance, water supply, sewer or septic systems, solid waste disposal, health, or other governmental services? If any, specify: _____		X				
b. Will the proposed action have an effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues?		X				
c. Will the proposed action result in a need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications?		X				
d. Will the proposed action result in increased used of any energy source?		X				
e. Define projected revenue sources		X				10e.
f. Define projected maintenance costs		X				

Comment 10e. No additional revenue beyond routine budget levels will be necessary to conduct this project or monitor results. Estimated costs for rotenone and potassium permanganate are $375 and $480, respectively. Adequate quantities of both items are currently on-hand, remaining from previously conducted projects. Costs of all aspects of WCT introductions are covered by existing budgets and will not require 'new' money.

11. AESTHETICS/RECREATION Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?		X				
b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood?		X				
c. Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational/tourism opportunities and settings? (Attach Tourism Report)			X		yes	See 11c
d. Will any designated or proposed wild or scenic rivers, trails or wilderness areas be impacted? (Also see 11a, 11c)		X				

Comment 11c: There would be a temporary loss of angling opportunity in the upper Ruby Creek drainage between the time of fish removal and for several years (3 – 7) until genetically pure WCT have been reestablished throughout the drainage. The rainbow trout fishery would be eliminated above the barrier, though a fishery would remain in Ruby Creek below the waterfall and in numerous streams throughout the local area including the Madison River. In most cases, cutthroat trout fisheries in Montana streams are catch and release only. After establishment of WCT in the Ruby Creek drainage, FWP would evaluate whether the fishery could support harvest, and if possible, regulations would be changed to allow anglers the option of harvesting WCT for consumption.

12. CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Destruction or alteration of any site, structure or object of prehistoric historic, or paleontological importance?		X				
b. Physical change that would affect unique cultural values?		X				
c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area?		X				12c
d. Will the project affect historic or cultural resources?		X				

Comment 12 c. The project site is located within the aboriginal range of several Native American tribes. Cultural officers for tribes which would have interest in this project will be contacted through the MEPA process to identify any potential effects on existing religious or sacred uses of the area. There would be no ground breaking activities associated with this project, and there are no known potential impacts to historical, cultural or religious values.

13. SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE Will the proposed action, considered as a whole:	IMPACT Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project or program may result in impacts on two or more separate resources which create a significant effect when considered together or in total.)		X				
b. Involve potential risks or adverse effects which are uncertain but extremely hazardous if they were to occur?		X				
c. Potentially conflict with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan?		X				
d. Establish a precedent or likelihood that future actions with significant environmental impacts will be proposed?		X				
e. Generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts that would be created?	X				Yes	13e
f. Is the project expected to have organized opposition or generate substantial public controversy? (Also see 13e)	X					13f
g. List any federal or state permits required.						13g

Comments 13e and f: FWP has a long history of completing rotenone projects; however, the use of piscicides can generate angst among some people. It is not known if this project would have organized opposition. Public outreach and information programs can educate the public on the use of piscicides, and a public open house concerning the project will be held in Ennis during the public comment period. FWP has also worked closely with the local BLM and USFS staff during the development of this project, and no significant issues have been identified.

Informal discussions with private landowners adjacent to the proposed project area identified their concern over the loss of the existing fish population they have stewarded over the years by returning fish to the stream that have become entrained in their irrigation ditches. If this project is conducted, at least one electrofishing run would be made through the accessible portion of Ruby Creek, expected to be approximately 5 stream miles, to capture and transfer non-native rainbow trout to the Madison River. Such an effort would likely require six or more worker-days per day for 3 days. Establishment of a WCT population from the expected donor sources would result in a significant and unique trout population in upper Ruby Creek composed of aboriginal trout native to the Madison Drainage.

Comment 13g: FWP consulted with the BLM Dillon Field Office and USFS Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest during the planning and development phases of this project. No special use permit is required by FWP. The following permit would be required from the Montana Department of Environmental Quality:

- Notice of Intent under the Montana DEQ Pesticide General Permit

PART IV. ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT CONCLUSION SECTION

A) *Is an Environmental Impact Statement Required (EIS)?*

No. An EIS is not required under the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) because the project lacks significant impacts to the physical, biological or human environment. Impacts of the proposed action are expected to be short-term and minor, and are appropriately addressed through an Environmental Assessment.

B) *Public involvement:*

The public will be notified through local newspapers and through contact with local landowners, sporting and recreational groups, and others who have previously indicated interest in similar projects. This EA will also be published on the Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks web page (http://fwp.mt.gov/default.html). The public comment period will be open for 30 days. This level of public involvement is believed adequate for the proposed project as recent and similar type piscicide efforts completed by FWP have produced no significant issues or controversy.

C) *Addresses to submit written comments:*

There is a 30 day comment period for this EA. Written comments can be mailed or emailed to the address below, and must be received by 5:00 pm, June 16, 2012. Please include name and address with any comment.

Pat Clancey
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Box 1336
100 Prairie Way, #6
Ennis, MT 59729
406.682.7807
pclancey@mt.gov

D) *Name, title, address, and telephone number of the person responsible for preparing this EA document:*

Same as above.

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Attachment 1:

Project support letters from the Bureau of Land Management
and
Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest

United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Dillon Field Office
1005 Selway Drive
Dillon, Montana 59725-8449
www.blm.gov/mt

TAKE PRIDE IN AMERICA

In Reply Refer To:

6520 (MTB050)

May 9, 2012

Pat Clancy
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
100 Prairie Way
Ennis, Montana 59729

Dear Mr. Clancy:

This letter is the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) official support of the Ruby Creek westslope cutthroat trout restoration project. The BLM, Dillon Field Office, is committed to the restoration of native species such as westslope cutthroat and is prepared to assist Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks in this project.

I believe that the Dillon Field Office is meeting the management goals for westslope cutthroat trout in Field Office area and will continue to strive to meet the objective set forth by the cutthroat trout conservation agreement for westslope cutthroat trout in Montana, of which the BLM was a signatory. We look forward to continued joint efforts aimed at restoration and preservation of this native trout species.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact Paul Hutchinson, Dillon Field Office, Fisheries Biologist, at 406-683-8000.

Sincerely,

Tim Bozorth

Tim Bozorth
Field Manager

USDA United States Department of Agriculture | Forest Service | Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest Madison Ranger District | 5 Forest Service Road Ennis MT 59729 406-682-4253

File Code: 2670
Date: September 16, 2011

Pat Clancey
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Box 1336
100 Prairie Way, #6
Ennis, MT 59729

Dear Pat:

This letter is to inform you of the Madison Ranger District's support of the "Reintroduction of Native Westslope Cutthroat Trout in Ruby Creek by Removal of Nonnative Rainbow Trout" project. Westslope cutthroat trout (WCT) conservation is an area of emphasis for the Fisheries Program on the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest, and the District is pleased to partner with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (MFWP) on this project.

The Madison District strives to meet WCT restoration and conservation goals and I believe our land management direction is consistent with your efforts to expand and secure cutthroat trout populations across the District. We will continue to emphasize consistent implementation of that direction and look forward to working with you on this project to move toward accomplishing the goals and objectives set forth in the 2007 MOU and Conservation Agreement for Cutthroat Trout. Once nonnative rainbow trout are removed and WCT are established in Ruby Creek, the Madison District plans to qualitatively assess stream habitat in the Ruby Creek drainage and implement projects that will increase the quantity and quality of pool and spawning habitat if needed.

The District appreciates MFWP's commitment to native species restoration on National Forest lands and is eager to work cooperatively with MFWP Region 3 fisheries staff throughout all phases of the Ruby Creek Project.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the Madison Ranger District fisheries biologist, Darin Watschke, at (406) 682-4253.

Sincerely,

SUSAN L. HEALD
District Ranger

Cc: Travis Horton, MT FWP Region 3, 1400 South, 19th, Bozeman, MT 59718
Jim Brammer, Beaverhead-Deerlodge N.F, Forest Aquatics, Program Manager